

EXTRACTS FROM THE ACCOUNTS
OF THE
REVELS AT COURT,
IN THE REIGNS OF
QUEEN ELIZABETH AND KING JAMES I.,
FROM THE
ORIGINAL OFFICE BOOKS OF THE MASTERS AND YEOMEN.
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,
BY
PETER CUNNINGHAM.



LONDON ·
PRINTED FOR THE SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY.

1842.

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A

INTRODUCTION.

When, by the kindness of the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Peel, I was appointed to a situation in the Audit Office, Somerset House, one of my first inquiries, unconnected with my official duties, was, What *old papers* there were in the place. To this there was a ready reply. I was told of Books of Enrolments and of Declared Accounts as far back as the reign of Henry VIII.; but no one could tell me of their contents—for few could read them; while some had heard that we were in possession of the expenses of building Dover Castle and the Tower of London—

Ye towers of Julius, London's lasting shame—

signed, it was said, by no less ancient a personage than Julius Cæsar. Of course I did not confound with these very worthy gentlemen, and clever in their way, though indifferent antiquaries, honest Sir Julius Cæsar, Under-Chancellor of the Exchequer in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James, with the great historian of his own successes, the hero of Pharsalia.

All this gave no other promise than that the field of antiquarian inquiry in the office of the old Auditors of the Imprest was still ungleaned, and that, if I was not to receive assistance, I was at least to be without a rival.

With the hope of finding entries which might throw light on our early literature, I sought permission to examine the Books of Enrolment and Declared Accounts. This I obtained by the great kindness of the chairman of the office, Francis Seymour Larpent, Esq.; with full liberty to transcribe what I liked, and to seek for what I thought was there, or ought to be there. I first went through that portion of the Declared Accounts in Rolls that bore upon the reigns of Elizabeth and James I.; and which I thought was likely to contain information illustrative of the literary history of those reigns.

In my first day's search I found three rolls of the expenses of Prince Henry; one excessively curious, and of some importance in our literary history. This was "The Accompte of the Money Expended by Sir David Murray K^t as Keeper of the Privie Purse to the late Noble Prynce Henry, Prynce of Wales, from the first of October 1610 to the sixth of November 1612 (the daye of the decease of the said Prynce) as lykewise for certaine paymentes made after the deathe of the saide Prynce in the monethes of November and December 1612." I at once saw that Birch knew nothing of this roll, and that it contained entries of payments to Michael Drayton, Joshua Sylvester, Inigo Jones, and others.

One of the first payments recorded in this account is for:

THE PRYNCE'S MASKE.

Payde to sondrye persons for the chardges of a Maske presented by the Prince before the Kinges matie on Newyeres day at night beinge the first of Januarie 1610. viz.

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	li. ^{xx}	s.	d.
To Mercers	cciiij ^{xx} ix	viiij	v
Sylkemen	cciiij ^{xx} xviiij	xv	vj
Haberdashers	lxxiiij	viiij	viiij
Embroderers	iiij ^{xx} ix	xvj	ix
Girdelers and others for skarfes, beltes and gloves	lxxiiij	viiij	
Hosyers for silke stockinges, poyntes and rybbons	xlx	xvj	
Cutler	vij	iiij	
Tyrewoman	xlij	vj	
Taylors	cxliij	xiiij	vj
Shoemaker	vj	x	
To Inigoe Jones devyser for the saide Maske .	xvj		

In all M.^{xx}iiijxij vj x

“The Prynces Maske” was the work of Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones. In Jonson’s works it is called “Oberon, the Fairy Prince; a Masque of Prince Henry’s;” but at what period it was played at court Mr. Gifford was unable to determine. The above extract sets the matter at rest, and confirms Mr. Collier in his conjecture that the Masque of “Oberon” was performed on New Year’s Day 1610.*

The account seemed to increase in interest as I went on; and when I remembered that Sir David Murray was himself a poet, I was in expectation that I should meet with the name of Shakespeare. The prince was a lover of poetry; and not only, says Ben Jonson, did he honour her with his care, but examined with his own eye and inquired into all her beauties and strengths. His name is, moreover, embalmed in the verses of Ben Jonson, the poet Daniel, Michael Drayton, Thomas Heywood, Joshua Sylvester, Bishop Hall,

* Gifford’s Jonson, vol. viii. p. 279.—Collier’s Annals, vol. i. p. 375.